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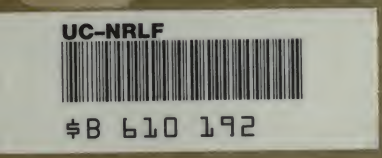

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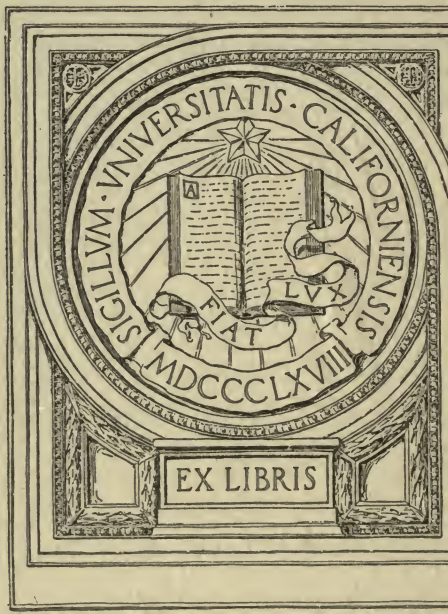

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- TO CARDENIO -

With the Translator's compliments.

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TO CARDENIO

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

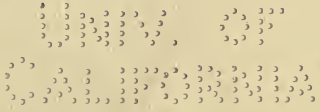
PLATEN

BY

REGINALD B. COOKE, Ph. D.

ITHACA, NEW YORK

1919.



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Foreword

In submitting to a small circle of readers these further translations from Platen, there is no occasion to repeat what has been said by way of preface to my translations of the *Sonette aus Venedig*.*

The eight sonnets which constitute the series *An Cardenio* were composed between November, 1822 and May, 1823. So far as can be ascertained none of them has been hitherto translated into English.

These sonnets, like those addressed some years later to Karl Theodor German, are not perhaps wholly in accord with modern taste, but it must be remembered that Platen was a thorough classicist, hardly less in the content and inspiration of his work than in his craftsmanship.

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*Madison, Wis., 1914.

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The rhyme-scheme of these translations is again identical with that of the originals, and every attempt has been made toward a literal rendering.

The rhyming of the sestets in the first and second of these sonnets is quite unusual with Platen, and although it is the method predominant with all the Italian Masters excepting Ariosto, it appears inferior to the double alternating rhyme which Petrarch employed with hardly less frequency, and which is regularly found in Platen and Rückert.

Cornell University. R. B. C.

I.

HITHER compelled, perplexed at heart lest you
I should not find, I traced my steps, a prey,
All for my love of thee, to dark dismay,
Lest hope should vanish like a dream untrue.
A thousand times estranged, alas! we two
Had parted each upon his lonely way,
And bitter was our last farewell that day,
Nor clasped we hands, as friends are wont to do.
Where thou wert tarrying how might I know?
What friends meanwhile enjoyed thy company
And fond affections how could I surmise?
And if at last I had not found thee? Oh,
I will forget this futile If, for he
Whom long I sought stands now before mine eyes.

II.

MY friend, as yet you seem but young, for Ah!
Little you know what burdens we endure,
Or how, when many a time we feel most sure
The goal is nigh, th' event doth sadly mar
Our hopes. Youth follows still its lucky star
Whithersoever fortune may allure;
Old age yet lingers pondering by the shore,
Or treads the bridge to barren lands afar.
You are too young as yet to comprehend
How oft in vain the spirit seeks repose,
Turning now north now south in ceaseless quest.
And Oh, I pray that never mayst thou lend
Thy youthful days to succor one who knows
Life's weariness, but not the joys of rest.

III.

WHEN first I saw thee, though perchance by pride
A captive held, to me you seemed most fair.
The glasses rang and voices filled the air,
And soon thou wast departed. Far and wide
I meanwhile roamed, yet, not to be denied,
A longing filled my heart, and waxes there
Till, like an avalanche of snow, it dare
To bury us beneath its swelling tide.
And when anew I found thee, more and more
I truly learned lo love thee, and again
Parted, again we met. So fortune bore
Us hence and hither in the fated train
Of everchanging hours. Alone I saw
Thy beauty and thy pride unchanged remain.

IV.

WELL I recall that bitter winter's night,
More exquisite than any night in spring,
When I, my friend, could watch thee carrying
A torch, so to direct me by its light
Upon our solitary path. How bright
And beautiful the myriad sparks would fling
Abroad their radiant showers, as, in a ring,
You whirled the fiery fagots left and right.
The distant orbs were envious to see
Thy torch's beams, yet lovingly the Wain
Seemed with its seven stars to beckon thee.
'Tis in such hours as these our thoughts remain
Too willingly unspoken. Who would be
So bold as to surmise their silent train?

V.

SCARCE dare I touch thy locks, and so to me
It seems the haughty cap, so closely drawn
Upon thy curly hair as but to adorn
Thy beauty, ev'n more enviable must be
Than were the gold of true maturity.
I envy, too, this pipe, happily worn
By kisses; yet swift as the smoke is borne
From sight, so fickle is thy constancy.
Forswear, I pray, thy pride; be not so rough
As to begrudge me still the curling rings
Which you permit even to that dead stuff,
And deem me worthy, so the future brings
To me the fortunes of thy pipe. Enough;
I am thy slave if you but grant these things.

VI.

ALONE with thee, what utter happiness
Were mine to share thy silent thoughts, which vow
'Twixt us an end to doubt —while gay throngs now
Pass to and fro —and stealthily to press
Thine hand. And then my gaze in rapt duress
Must tarry where a thousand charms endow
Thy features; on thy moving lips, and brow,
And eyes, and all thy youthful comeliness.
I am not borne away at the behest
Of some mean thirst for love. Rather to me
Thy favor grants repose; and for the rest
I am disturbed by no anxiety
Nor fear to lose my well-won prize. Thus blest
Am I by fortune —everlastingly.

VII.

I drank th' o'erflowing cup of death; yet not
That which the world calls death, for happy they
Already in the coffin laid away
And lowered with ropes to some abysmal spot.
Oh, were I but departed and forgot,
And, shrouded all in white as cold I lay,
Borne forth in ceremonious array,
With friends to dedicate the broken plot.
Alas! I have no confidants, no friends.
I steal in silence past the merry fun
Of revelers, and no one comprehends
My loneliness; yet even now the sun
Too long has warmed me, for my gaze but lends
Strength to my grief until my course be run.

VIII.

WHAT do you care for all my tears distressed
By day and night outpoured! The blood might s
From out mine eyes, yet wouldst thou ne'er impart
To me thy pity. Had I unsuppressed
Cherished some guilty passion in my breast
Whenever we had chanced to meet or part,
Then it were just that thou shouldst bar thine heart,
And that thine enmity should be confessed.
But I had sworn to be for ever true,
Until with piercing looks of proud disdain
You drove me hence. Alas! what shall I do?
Thy bitter hatred renders all in vain;
For always still thy cruel words pursue
My every thought, and drive my mind insane.

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